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ABSTRACT

A study investigated whether the incidence of ageism has diminished in recent editions of basal readers. Materials examined in the study were the 1971 and 1980 editions of the American Book Company Reading Series, the 1973 and 1980 editions of the Holt Basic Reading System, the 1971 and 1981 editions of the Houghton Mifflin Reading Series, and the 1970 and 1980 editions of the Macmillan Reading Program. The fourth and fifth grade books in each series were read in their entirety, and information was gathered to determine whether the elderly in the stories were main, significant, or support characters and to establish their relationships and roles in the stories. In addition, descriptions of behavioral traits, physical attributes, and qualities of personality were analyzed and categorized. A comparative analysis of data from the older and newer editions showed that the percentage of elderly present in stories and illustrations had increased, and that some improvement existed in the portrayal of the living arrangements, behavioral traits, and activities of older characters. However, a lack of realism was found in the depiction of the personality, health, and appearance of the elderly in the newer as well as the older editions. (FL)

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HAS THE INCIDENCE OF AGEISM DECREASED IN RECENT EDITIONS OF BASAL READERS?

by

Diane Moskowitz

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Masters of Arts degree
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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine whether the incidence of ageism has diminished in recent editions of basal readers. An older and newer edition of four basal reading series for grades four and five were selected. The books were read in their entirety, and the information obtained was tabulated in chart form.

The percent of elderly in stories and illustrations increased, and improvement was made in the portrayal of their living arrangements, behavioral traits and daily activities. A deficiency exists, however, in the depiction of personality, health and appearance. Thus, while ageism has decreased, a lack of realism still exists.

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Senior citizens in the United States are the most vulnerable citizens in our society both economically and socially. More Americans than ever before are approaching old age, and attempts must be made to create an environment and attitude that is responsive to the needs of the elderly. Before that can be done, attempts must be made to accurately portray seniors in their life roles since the stereotypes of old age are no longer applicable.

It is estimated that by the year 2030 twenty percent of the American people will be sixty-five years of age or older. Editors of basal reading series have the responsibility to insure that their materials will help to eliminate ageism and will portray the elderly in proportion to their numbers and sex in this country. An accurate, fair and varied view of senior citizen lifestyles should be presented in terms of economic levels, housing, physical processes, occupations, sexual expression and spiritual, social and intellectual activities (Spencer, 1979).

The way in which basal readers portray values and attitudes can influence, both positively and negatively, atti-

tudes children develop. Students should be helped to appreciate the importance of older persons through the emphasis of their past and present contributions and their potential for future contributions. Ageism in basal readers should be eliminated, and the subject of old age should be dealt with realistically, sensitively and thoughtfully.

Britton and Lumpkin (1977) describes anti-bias guides issued by basal reader publishers for their authors and editors to follow when working on textbooks. In studying bias in editions of textbooks printed after the guides were issued, the authors found that changes were minimal. They conclude that a problem does not disappear by acknowledging it and express a need for specific timetables and procedures to assist in the process.

A catalog is described in Today's Education (1980) that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has compiled entitled, Fair Textbooks: A Resource Guide. Its purpose is to promote, ". . . equality based on sex, race, ethnicity, and, in general, greater social fairness for all." The guide was designed to help those involved in curriculum planning to use, most effectively, the enormous amount of materials available in this area. Committees of educators choosing basal readers must try to ascertain whether the basal will prejudice children about various groups of people, including the aged.

Aging is generally linked to the elderly and the debilitating effects on the mind and on the body generally associated with old age. Young children need to recognize that aging is a lifetime process of transition. It begins with the infant, toddler and child, and it extends to the adolescent, teen and adult. All these stages have both negative and positive aspects from a psychological, sociological, biological and economic point of view, and, with this in mind, appropriate preparation for later life can be made.

Cameron (1976) notes that by ten years of age negative attitudes toward senior citizens can be observed. Since attitude patterns are still flexible at an early age, it is important to provide accurate and fair information during the elementary school years. Having a good attitude about the aged in general will influence children's attitudes towards their own aging because they will have accurate expectations of their own aging process.

Strategies for Linking the Generations - A Report of the 1981 White House Conference on Aging recommended that schools be encouraged to incorporate materials about aging in their curriculum and that printed materials be reviewed for ageist bias. Examples are given of specific projects that various communities have initiated in intergenerational understanding at the elementary school level with the hope that they will also be adopted by other communities.

Death, illness and loneliness are major themes concerning senior citizens in newspapers and in the media in general. This not only contributes to and reinforces the fear that the young have of growing old, but it also widens the sense of difference and distance between the generations.

School children read newspapers, and an investigation by Buchholz and Bynum (1982) suggests that two newspapers they researched received mixed marks in their coverage of senior citizens. They suggest that this was only one more indication of a failure by the media throughout the country to portray an accurate, realistic and balanced picture of the elderly and other groups as well.

Many of the current feelings and beliefs about the elderly are based on fantasy instead of fact. Because it is necessary for children to have an accurate assessment of aging and because it is also necessary to enhance their image of the aging, a study on whether the incidence of ageism has decreased in recent editions of basal readers is pertinent.

Hypothesis

The incidence of Ageism will have diminished in newer editions of basal readers as compared to earlier ones, but the portrayal of the elderly will still differ from reality.

Definitions

Ageism - discrimination against old or elderly people.

Character - a person in a play, poem, story or book.

Old Age - the years of life from about 65 on in human beings.

Role - a part played in real life.

Stereotype - a fixed, hackneyed form, expression or character.

Procedures

Since this study compares ageism in different editions of basal readers developed by the same publishing company, an older and newer edition of four basal reading series for grades four and five were selected.

The basal reading series used included:

The American Book Company Reading Series (1971 Edition), grades four and five and The American Book Company Reading Series (1980 Edition), grades four and five, published by Litton Educational Publishing, Inc.

The Holt Basic Reading System (1973 Edition), grades four and five and The Holt Basic Reading System (1980 Edition), grades four and five, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Publishers.

The Houghton Mifflin Reading Series (1971 Edition), grades four and five and The Houghton Mifflin Reading

Series (1981 Edition), grades four and five, published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

The Macmillan Reading Program (1970 Edition), grades four and five and the Macmillan Reading Series "r" (1980 Edition), grades four and five, published by Macmillan Publishing Company and Collier Macmillan Publishers.

The fourth and fifth grade books in each series were read in their entirety, and the information obtained was tabulated in chart form. Notations were recorded concerning the number, the ages and the sex of characters in the stories and illustrations.

Tabulations were made specifically for the elderly in the basal stories to determine if they were the main, significant or support characters and also to establish their relationship and role in the story. In addition, descriptions of behavioral traits, physical attributes and the quality of personality were analyzed and categorized.

A comparative analysis was then made of the older and newer editions of the basal readers, utilizing the number, sex, significance, role and description of seniors in the stories, to determine whether the incidence of ageism had decreased in recent versions.

Results

In order to compare the incidence of ageism in older and newer editions of fourth and fifth grade basal readers developed by The American, Holt, Houghton Mifflin and Macmillan Publishing Companies, 17 tables were constructed. In many cases the numbers dealt with were small, and a slight shift had a significant impact on the percentages involved.

Table I indicates that the percent of elderly characters increased in the newer editions in five out of eight cases. In two of the three comparisons that decreased, the decrease was relatively insignificant.

In Table II it can be noted that the percent of elderly female characters increased in all cases, sometimes significantly. Elderly male characters, however, did not fare as well. The comparisons show an increase in two cases (both American Book Company), a decrease in five cases, while one remained constant.

When comparing the number of elderly male characters to the number of male characters (Table III), it appears that the percent of elderly male characters increased in half the cases and decreased in half the cases. When comparing the number of elderly female characters to the number of female characters (Table IV), it appears that the percent of elderly female characters increased in five of the cases and decreased in three of the cases. The elderly female characters showed more gain than the elderly male characters in terms of the

TABLE I

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY AS CHARACTERS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Characters	Number of Elderly Characters	Percent of Elderly Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	213	6	2.8
1980 Edition - Grade 4	169	7	4.1
1971 Edition - Grade 5	277	11	4.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	195	11	5.6
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	195	11	5.6
1980 Edition - Grade 4	241	17	7.1
1973 Edition - Grade 5	249	16	6.4
1980 Edition - Grade 5	258	12	4.7
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	262	8	3.1
1981 Edition - Grade 4	311	13	4.2
1971 Edition - Grade 5	268	9	3.4
1981 Edition - Grade 5	293	11	3.8
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	182	9	4.9
1980 Edition - Grade 4	209	10	4.8
1970 Edition - Grade 5	279	12	4.3
1980 Edition - Grade 5	239	10	4.2

TABLE II

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY MALE/FEMALE CHARACTERS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Characters	Number of Elderly Male Characters	Percent of Elderly Male Characters	Number of Elderly Female Characters	Percent of Elderly Female Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY					
1971 Edition - Grade 4	213	5	2.3	1	0.5
1980 Edition - Grade 4	169	5	3.0	2	1.2
1971 Edition - Grade 5	277	7	2.5	4	1.4
1980 Edition - Grade 5	195	8	4.1	3	1.5
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM					
1973 Edition - Grade 4	195	8	4.1	3	1.5
1980 Edition - Grade 4	241	10	4.1	7	2.9
1973 Edition - Grade 5	249	11	4.4	5	2.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	255	5	2.0	7	2.7
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES					
1971 Edition - Grade 4	262	7	2.7	1	0.4
1981 Edition - Grade 4	311	5	1.6	8	2.6
1971 Edition - Grade 5	268	7	2.6	2	0.7
1981 Edition - Grade 5	293	7	2.4	4	1.4
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM					
1970 Edition - Grade 4	182	7	3.8	2	1.1
1980 Edition - Grade 4	209	5	2.4	5	2.4
1970 Edition - Grade 5	279	8	2.9	4	1.4
1980 Edition - Grade 5	239	5	2.1	5	2.1

TABLE III

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY MALE CHARACTERS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Male Characters	Number of Elderly Male Characters	Percent of Elderly Male Characters Compared to Male Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	168	5	3.0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	105	5	4.8
1971 Edition - Grade 5	194	7	3.6
1980 Edition - Grade 5	130	8	6.2
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	128	8	6.3
1980 Edition - Grade 4	144	10	6.9
1973 Edition - Grade 5	174	11	6.3
1980 Edition - Grade 5	149	5	3.4
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	181	7	3.9
1981 Edition - Grade 4	200	5	2.5
1971 Edition - Grade 5	209	7	3.3
1981 Edition - Grade 5	206	7	3.4
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	121	7	5.8
1980 Edition - Grade 4	116	5	4.3
1970 Edition - Grade 5	214	8	3.7
1980 Edition - Grade 5	154	5	3.2

TABLE IV

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY FEMALE CHARACTERS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Female Characters	Number of Elderly Female Characters	Percent of Elderly Female Characters Compared to Male Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	45	1	2.2
1980 Edition - Grade 4	64	2	3.1
1971 Edition - Grade 5	83	4	4.8
1980 Edition - Grade 5	65	3	4.6
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	67	3	4.5
1980 Edition - Grade 4	97	7	7.2
1973 Edition - Grade 5	75	5	6.7
1980 Edition - Grade 5	106	7	6.6
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	81	1	1.2
1981 Edition - Grade 4	111	8	7.2
1971 Edition - Grade 5	59	2	3.4
1981 Edition - Grade 5	87	4	4.6
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	61	2	3.3
1980 Edition - Grade 4	93	5	5.4
1970 Edition - Grade 5	65	4	6.2
1980 Edition - Grade 5	85	5	5.9

number of character increases and the significance of the increase.

Table V, which compares the number of elderly main characters with the number of main characters, yielded the information that the percent of elderly main characters compared to main characters increased in half the cases and decreased in half the cases. In the cases that increased, the increase was significant; while in the cases that decreased, the decrease was less considerable, with two down just slightly.

The percentage of elderly male main characters as compared to male main characters (Table VI) showed an increase in six cases and a decrease in two cases. The females did not do as well when the percentage of elderly female main characters as compared to female main characters (Table VII) was analyzed. Four cases went down, three went up and one remained the same.

Table VIII, in which the percentage of elderly main characters as compared to elderly characters is analyzed, shows an upward trend. Five cases increased, two cases decreased and one remained the same.

Elderly characters are apparently being portrayed with more positive behavioral traits in recent editions of basal readers. Table IX demonstrates that the percent of elderly characters with positive behavioral traits is up in five cases, down in two cases and the same in one, while the

TABLE V

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY AS MAIN CHARACTERS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Main Characters	Number of Elderly Main Characters	Percent of Elderly Main Characters Compared to Main Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	25	1	4.0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	24	2	8.3
1971 Edition - Grade 5	34	2	5.9
1980 Edition - Grade 5	38	2	5.3
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	37	1	2.7
1980 Edition - Grade 4	40	3	7.5
1973 Edition - Grade 5	33	4	12.1
1980 Edition - Grade 5	49	4	8.2
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	34	2	5.9
1981 Edition - Grade 4	24	3	12.5
1971 Edition - Grade 5	29	1	3.4
1981 Edition - Grade 5	37	4	10.8
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	39	4	10.3
1980 Edition - Grade 4	40	2	5.0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	47	5	10.6
1980 Edition - Grade 5	52	5	9.6

TABLE VI

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF MALE ELDERLY AS MAIN CHARACTERS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Male Main Characters	Number of Elderly Male Main Characters	Percent of Elderly Male Main Characters Compared to Male Main Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	17	1	5.9
1980 Edition - Grade 4	12	2	16.7
1971 Edition - Grade 5	24	2	8.3
1980 Edition - Grade 5	21	1	4.8
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	25	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	25	2	8.0
1973 Edition - Grade 5	29	3	10.3
1980 Edition - Grade 5	29	2	6.9
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	28	2	7.1
1981 Edition - Grade 4	12	1	8.3
1971 Edition - Grade 5	24	1	4.2
1981 Edition - Grade 5	18	2	11.1
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	28	2	7.1
1980 Edition - Grade 4	20	2	10.0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	40	3	7.5
1980 Edition - Grade 5	31	3	9.7

TABLE VII

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF FEMALE ELDERLY AS MAIN CHARACTERS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Female Main Characters	Number of Elderly Female Main Characters	Percent of Elderly Female Main Characters Compared to Female Main Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	12	0	0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	10	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	17	1	5.9
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	12	1	8.3
1980 Edition - Grade 4	15	1	6.7
1973 Edition - Grade 5	4	1	25.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	20	2	10.0
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	0	0
1981 Edition - Grade 4	12	2	16.7
1971 Edition - Grade 5	5	0	0
1981 Edition - Grade 5	19	2	10.5
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	11	2	18.2
1980 Edition - Grade 4	20	0	0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	7	2	28.6
1980 Edition - Grade 5	21	2	9.5

TABLE VIII

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY AS MAIN CHARACTERS COMPARED TO TOTAL NUMBER OF ELDERLY IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters	Number of Elderly Main Characters	Percent of Elderly Main Characters Compared With Elderly Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	1	16.7
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	2	28.6
1971 Edition - Grade 5	11	2	18.2
1980 Edition - Grade 5	11	2	18.2
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	11	1	9.1
1980 Edition - Grade 4	17	3	17.6
1973 Edition - Grade 5	16	4	25.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	12	4	33.3
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	2	25.0
1981 Edition - Grade 4	13	3	23.1
1971 Edition - Grade 5	9	1	11.1
1981 Edition - Grade 5	11	4	36.4
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	9	4	44.4
1980 Edition - Grade 4	10	2	20.0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	12	5	41.7
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	5	50.0

TABLE IX

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY CHARACTERS WITH POSITIVE/NEGATIVE BEHAVIORAL TRAITS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters	Number of Elderly Characters With Positive Behavioral Traits	Percent of Elderly Characters With Positive Behavioral Characters	Number of Elderly Characters With Negative Behavioral Characters	Percent of Elderly Characters With Negative Behavioral Characters
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY					
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	2	33.3	1	16.7
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	3	42.9	1	14.3
1971 Edition - Grade 5	11	7	63.6	1	9.1
1980 Edition - Grade 5	11	3	27.3	0	0
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM					
1973 Edition - Grade 4	11	9	81.8	1	9.1
1980 Edition - Grade 4	17	14	82.4	1	5.9
1973 Edition - Grade 5	16	8	50.0	5	31.3
1980 Edition - Grade 5	12	4	33.3	3	25.0
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES					
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	6	75.0	0	0
1981 Edition - Grade 4	13	12	92.3	0	0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	9	4	44.4	1	11.1
1981 Edition - Grade 5	11	10	90.9	0	0
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM					
1970 Edition - Grade 4	9	9	100.0	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	10	10	100.0	0	0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	12	8	66.7	3	25.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	8	80.0	2	20.0

percent of elderly characters with negative behavioral traits is down in six cases and the same in two cases.

Senior citizens are evidently being described more fully in basal readers now. Table X yields the information that the percent of elderly characters whose living arrangements are unknown has decreased in seven out of eight cases, while the percent of elderly characters who are portrayed as living with a spouse or other family member has increased in seven out of eight cases. The percent of elderly who live alone remained the same in five cases, increased in two cases and decreased in one case. Macmillan seems to have made the least progress in this area.

Table XI illustrates that half the cases increased and half the cases decreased in both the percentage of elderly characters portrayed in careers and the percentage of elderly characters portrayed in a family/friend role.

The percent of elderly characters with physical disabilities (Table XII) demonstrates an increase in five cases, a decrease in two cases and no change in one case. The percent of elderly whose quality of personality was fully depicted (Table XIII) shows that four cases remained the same, three decreased and one increased. Macmillan, once again, was found neglectful in this category.

When the percent of elderly characters with an old fashioned appearance was tallied in Table XIV, it appears that half the cases increased and half decreased. Holt showed a

TABLE X

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF ELDERLY CHARACTERS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters	Number of Elderly Characters Whose Living Arrangements Are Unknown	Percent of Elderly Characters Whose Living Arrangements Are Unknown	Number of Elderly Characters Who Live With Spouse or Other Family	Percent of Elderly Characters Who Live With Spouse or Other Family	Number of Elderly Characters Who Live Alone	Percent of Elderly Characters Who Live Alone
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY							
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	5	83.3	1	16.7	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	5	71.4	2	28.6	0	0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	11	9	81.8	2	18.2	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	11	8	72.7	3	27.3	0	0
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM							
1973 Edition - Grade 4	11	9	81.8	2	18.2	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	17	12	70.6	5	29.4	0	0
1973 Edition - Grade 5	16	11	68.8	3	18.8	2	12.5
1980 Edition - Grade 5	12	8	66.7	4	33.3	0	0
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES							
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	8	100.0	0	0	0	0
1981 Edition - Grade 4	13	4	30.8	9	69.2	0	0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	9	7	77.8	2	22.2	0	0
1981 Edition - Grade 5	11	5	45.5	3	27.3	3	27.3
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM							
1970 Edition - Grade 4	9	6	66.7	3	33.3	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	10	3	30.0	7	70.0	0	0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	12	7	58.3	5	41.7	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	9	90.0	0	0	1	10.0

TABLE XI

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY CHARACTERS IN CAREER OR FAMILY/FRIEND ROLE IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters	Number of Elderly Characters In Careers	Percent of Elderly Characters In Careers	Number of Elderly Characters In Family/Friend Role	Percent of Elderly Characters In Family/Friend Role
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY					
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	3	50.0	3	50.0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	2	28.6	5	71.4
1971 Edition - Grade 5	11	5	45.5	6	54.5
1980 Edition - Grade 5	11	7	63.6	4	36.4
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM					
1973 Edition - Grade 4	11	4	36.4	7	63.6
1980 Edition - Grade 4	17	7	41.2	10	58.8
1973 Edition - Grade 5	16	10	62.5	6	35.7
1980 Edition - Grade 5	12	8	66.7	4	33.3
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES					
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	4	50.0	4	50.0
1981 Edition - Grade 4	13	4	30.8	9	69.2
1971 Edition - Grade 5	9	4	44.4	5	55.6
1981 Edition - Grade 5	11	5	45.5	6	54.5
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM					
1970 Edition - Grade 4	9	7	77.8	2	22.2
1980 Edition - Grade 4	10	3	30.0	7	70.0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	12	7	58.3	5	41.7
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	5	50.0	5	50.0

TABLE XII

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY CHARACTERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters	Number of Elderly Characters With Physical Disabilities	Percent of Elderly Characters With Physical Disabilities
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	1	14.3
1971 Edition - Grade 5	11	1	9.1
1980 Edition - Grade 5	11	1	9.1
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	11	1	9.1
1980 Edition - Grade 4	17	3	17.6
1973 Edition - Grade 5	16	4	25.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	12	2	16.7
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	1	12.5
1981 Edition - Grade 4	13	6	46.2
1971 Edition - Grade 5	9	1	11.1
1981 Edition - Grade 5	11	2	18.2
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	9	2	22.2
1980 Edition - Grade 4	10	3	30.0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	12	3	25.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	2	20.0

TABLE XIII

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY CHARACTERS WITH FULLY PORTRAYED PERSONALITIES IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters	Number of Elderly Whose Quality of Personality Was Fully Portrayed	Percent of Elderly Whose Quality of Personality Was Fully Portrayed
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	0	0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	11	1	9.1
1980 Edition - Grade 5	11	1	9.1
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	11	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	17	0	0
1973 Edition - Grade 5	16	2	12.5
1980 Edition - Grade 5	12	2	16.7
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	0	0
1981 Edition - Grade 4	13	0	0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	9	3	33.3
1981 Edition - Grade 5	11	3	27.3
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	9	1	11.1
1980 Edition - Grade 4	10	0	0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	12	3	25.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	0	0

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TABLE XIV

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY CHARACTERS WITH OLD FASHIONED APPEARANCE IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters	Number of Elderly Characters With Old Fashioned Appearance	Percent of Elderly Characters With Old Fashioned Appearance
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	1	16.7
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	3	42.9
1971 Edition - Grade 5	11	1	9.1
1980 Edition - Grade 5	11	2	18.2
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	11	4	36.4
1980 Edition - Grade 4	17	4	23.5
1973 Edition - Grade 5	16	5	31.3
1980 Edition - Grade 5	12	3	25.0
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	3	37.5
1981 Edition - Grade 4	13	3	23.1
1971 Edition - Grade 5	9	2	22.2
1981 Edition - Grade 5	11	4	36.4
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	9	2	22.2
1980 Edition - Grade 4	10	5	50.0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	12	5	41.7
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	3	30.0

decrease in this area in both their fourth and fifth grade basal readers.

The last three tables pertain to basal illustrations. Table XV indicates that the percent of elderly characters portrayed in illustrations went up in five cases and went down in three cases.

Table XVI breaks down the percent of elderly male characters and elderly female characters in illustrations as compared to the number of elderly characters in illustrations. Elderly male characters decreased in five cases and increased in three cases while the reverse was true for the elderly female characters. Here there was an increase in five cases and a decrease in three cases.

The last table (Table XVII) addresses itself to the problem of elderly characters who appear in illustrations, but are not identified as elderly in the story, and to the problem of elderly characters who appear in the story, but never appear in an illustration. In the first category, three cases increased, three decreased and two remained the same. In the second category, four cases decreased, three remained the same and one increased.

Conclusions and Implications

While the trend in the data of the study is not easily discernible, there does appear to be a slight tilt in the most recent editions of the basal readers studied toward

TABLE XV

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY CHARACTERS IN ILLUSTRATIONS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Characters in Illustrations	Number of Elderly Characters in Illustrations	Percent of Elderly Characters in Illustrations
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	284	2	0.7
1980 Edition - Grade 4	137	4	2.9
1971 Edition - Grade 5	177	4	2.3
1980 Edition - Grade 5	217	3	1.4
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM			
1973 Edition - Grade 4	258	7	2.7
1980 Edition - Grade 4	326	6	1.8
1973 Edition - Grade 5	266	10	3.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	226	9	4.0
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES			
1971 Edition - Grade 4	193	12	6.2
1981 Edition - Grade 4	164	12	7.3
1971 Edition - Grade 5	237	7	3.0
1981 Edition - Grade 5	187	10	5.3
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM			
1970 Edition - Grade 4	246	6	2.4
1980 Edition - Grade 4	202	7	3.5
1970 Edition - Grade 5	241	10	4.1
1980 Edition - Grade 5	261	10	3.8

TABLE XVI

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN ILLUSTRATIONS IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters In Illustrations	Number of Elderly Male Characters In Illustrations	Percent of Elderly Male Characters In Illustrations	Number of Elderly Female Characters In Illustrations	Percent of Elderly Female Characters In Illustrations
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY					
1971 Edition - Grade 4	2	1	50.0	1	50.0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	4	3	75.0	1	25.0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	4	4	100.0	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	3	1	33.3	2	66.7
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM					
1973 Edition - Grade 4	7	6	85.7	1	14.3
1980 Edition - Grade 4	6	5	83.3	1	16.7
1973 Edition - Grade 5	10	8	80.0	2	20.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	9	6	66.7	3	33.3
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES					
1971 Edition - Grade 4	12	9	75.0	3	25.0
1981 Edition - Grade 4	12	6	50.0	6	50.0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	7	6	85.7	1	14.3
1981 Edition - Grade 5	10	7	70.0	3	30.0
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM					
1970 Edition - Grade 4	6	3	50.0	3	50.0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	4	57.1	3	42.9
1970 Edition - Grade 5	10	7	70.0	3	30.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	8	80.0	2	20.0

TABLE XVII

COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF ELDERLY CHARACTERS NOT APPEARING IN STORY OR ILLUSTRATION IN EACH FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE BASAL SERIES

Publisher, Series and Grade Level	Number of Elderly Characters In Story	Number of Elderly Characters In Illustration But Not In Story	Percent of Elderly Characters In Illustration But Not In Story	Number of Elderly Characters In Illustration	Number of Elderly Characters In Story But Not In Illustration	Percent of Elderly Characters In Story But Not In Illustration
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY						
1971 Edition - Grade 4	6	0	0	2	3	150.0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	7	0	0	4	3	75.0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	11	0	0	4	5	125.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	11	0	0	3	2	66.7
HOLT BASIC READING SYSTEM						
1973 Edition - Grade 4	11	1	9.1	7	5	71.4
1980 Edition - Grade 4	17	1	5.9	6	9	150.0
1973 Edition - Grade 5	16	1	6.3	10	7	70.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	2	2	16.7	9	5	55.6
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING SERIES						
1971 Edition - Grade 4	8	7	87.5	12	3	25.0
1981 Edition - Grade 4	13	2	15.4	12	3	25.0
1971 Edition - Grade 5	9	4	44.4	7	5	71.4
1981 Edition - Grade 5	11	2	18.2	10	4	40.0
MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM						
1970 Edition - Grade 4	9	0	0	6	0	0
1980 Edition - Grade 4	10	1	10.0	7	0	0
1970 Edition - Grade 5	12	0	0	10	2	20.0
1980 Edition - Grade 5	10	2	20.0	10	2	20.0

portraying the aged population more numerously, more realistically and in a less stereotyped manner. But, while ageism does seem to have decreased slightly, a realistic portrayal of the elderly has still not been realized.

The percent of elderly characters in the basals increased in more than half of the newer editions reviewed. This gain, however, seems to have benefited older women to a higher degree than older men. The women gained in every newer edition, while the men only gained in two and actually decreased in five. The data suggests that an attempt was made to correspond to national demographic statistics for the female elderly, but, apparently, this seems to have occurred at the expense of elderly male characters.

Similar results were found, pertaining to the number of elderly characters and elderly male/female characters, in story illustrations. In addition, there are still a significant number of cases where basal reader illustrations differ from the written text. Although more aged characters who appear in stories now appear in illustrations, there was no improvement in the situation where seniors appear in illustrations, but fail to be identified as seniors in the story.

Older people are being portrayed more realistically and more fully now in terms of their living arrangements, their behavioral traits and their daily activities and responsibilities. There has also been some attempt to eliminate stereotypical portrayals of senior citizens in those same

categories.

Aged characters in the basals, however, are increasingly beset by poor health, limited personality depiction and also a continued portrayal of them with an old fashioned demeanor. Improvement is needed in these areas so that they will more accurately reflect reality.

According to an estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau, 11.6 percent of the American people are elderly. The Bureau's recent projections demonstrate that the number of senior citizens in our country is increasing more quickly than the American population as a whole. It is anticipated that by the year 2000, 13.1 percent of our people will be elderly, and by the year 2050, 21.7 percent of our population will be elderly (Pear, 1982).

In a recent New York Times Sunday Magazine article, author Betty Friedan (1983) said, "Feelings of déjà vu wash over me as I hear geriatric experts talk about the aged with the same patronizing 'compassionate' denial of their personhood that I hear when experts talked about women 20 years ago." The quantity, the quality and the depth of the portrayal of the elderly, in the recent editions of basal readers studied, leave much to be desired and may seem to amount to a denial of personhood for an aged population rapidly increasing both in their number and in the diversity of their lifestyles.

Our basal readers may appear to be protecting and reinforcing misconceptions and stereotyped ideas about old age and the aged. Textbook publishers should be encouraged to do their part to instill accurate, realistic and positive attitudes toward aging and to help to demonstrate to children that young folks and older folks have much in common. Both groups have problems that are peculiar to their age level and to their status in society, but both groups include widely varying individuals, and they share the whole range of human emotions in common. An improvement in this area will be healthy for the social consciousness of our country.

THE INCIDENCE OF AGEISM IN BASAL READERS: RELATED LITERATURE

Survey of Related Literature

New Jersey Education Commissioner Saul Cooperman (1982) has acknowledged the fact that the public seems to have lost faith in their schools. The dissatisfaction extends to both the academic and disciplinary aspects of public education. This has become a serious problem because support of schools is realized through tax dollars, and changes must be made to gain the public's confidence.

Cooperman suggested that one area of improvement has to be with the elderly segment of our population. Many Americans don't have children in schools and don't have the same feelings about the schools that the parents of school children do. Since the aged generally live on a fixed income, many of them have become active in defeating escalating local school budgets. The challenge here is to regain their trust and support and to address their needs as well.

The involvement of senior citizens in the public schools has been suggested by Jack Cassidy (1981) as a method of reducing the alienation of senior citizens from the schools. They can lend invaluable support and can be particularly helpful as volunteers in the reading program through individualized instruction, as an aide in large classes and as makers of instructional materials. Volunteers can be recruited through the newspaper, radio. notices and contact with organizations and agencies involved with the elderly. Once recruited and trained, they need encouragement, support,

reinforcement and appreciation -- as do volunteers of any age.

Cassidy maintains that this process can help the aged understand how important public education is and, in addition, will enhance the image of both teachers and students. The most important thing it will do, however, is to make the public schools an integral part of their own lives.

By ten years of age, notes Cameron (1976), negative attitudes toward senior citizens can be observed. Since attitude patterns are still flexible at an early age, it is important to provide accurate and fair information during the elementary school years. Having a good attitude about the aged in general will influence children's attitudes towards their own aging because they will have accurate expectations of their own aging process.

Seefeldt, Jantz, Galper and Serock (1977) organized an interview situation and gave children (180 in all, ranging from preschoolers to sixth graders) drawings of the same male, when he was 20 years old, 40 years old, 60 years old and 80 years old. Their awareness of age, and also their feelings, attitudes and behavior toward seniors were studied. It was found that children have clear concepts of age, even at 3, and they reject the aged due to negative stereotypes in the area of behavioral and physical characteristics.

Ulin (1982) wrote his book with a view towards helping educators teach children about aging. He wanted to help students understand the advantages and disadvantages of

aging; to help them relate better to senior citizens of their acquaintance; to help make aging less fearful for them; and to help them to age well themselves.

According to Ulin, the aged suddenly are news -- through nursing homes, Social Security, medicare and medicaid, crime, The White House Conference on Aging, The Gray Panthers, Meals on Wheels, Senior Surrey, Foster Grandparents, retirement communities, TV commercials, and, of course, the sheer numbers of senior citizens in our country. We are seeing the graying of the United States. These people are healthier, more active and better educated than ever before and are making themselves and their demands heard. Aging education is crucial at this time.

Educators have to help eliminate stereotyping and ageism, claims Ulin, because children's early attitudes continue into later life. Since these attitudes are bad for themselves and the elderly, schools have to take the initiative in this area. Organized contact between seniors and children produce positive attitude changes in children towards these older citizens.

Ulin feels that aging can be taught and that schools are a good place to teach it. He notes, in fact, that it is already part of the curriculum; it has always been taught through literature, history, biology, psychology, family life and interpersonal relationships. The curriculum merely has to be enhanced. Some of the areas of aging he considers to be

particularly important are the biology and psychology of aging; the historical, political, economic and sociological perspectives of aging; as well as the literature and cross-cultural aspects of aging.

The author gives us a historical perspective on aging education dating from 1835. He also suggests good sources of information on this subject and gives specific examples of current teaching.

In conclusion, Ulin notes that the generation gap between children, parents, and grandparents is now sharper and more devisive and destructive than ever before in terms of respect, distrust and stereotypes. Shall we blame this on history and technology and do nothing or shall we narrow the gap, or even close it, through social engineering? Since schools reflect and influence our society, there is work to be done.

Strategies for Linking the Generations - A Report of the 1981 White House Conference on Aging recommended that schools be encouraged to incorporate materials about aging in their curriculum and that printed materials be reviewed for ageist bias. Examples are given of specific projects that various communities have initiated in intergenerational understanding at the elementary school level with the hope that they will also be adopted by other communities.

A research project was undertaken to determine if adolescent attitudes toward older people can be changed through formal learning. Catanio (1980) claims that this study was important because adolescent views on this subject affect their interaction with the elderly now and as adults in the future. Also, these attitudes will affect their own self esteem when they become senior citizens. An experimental and a control group were established and both groups were pre-tested on their attitudes toward older adults. While there was only a small difference between the two groups in attitudes toward the aged in the pre-test, there was a significant change in the attitude of the experimental group in the post test. The results indicate that intervention programs such as these can be effective in modifying attitudes toward the aged.

It is estimated that by the year 2030 twenty percent of the American people will be sixty-five years of age or older. Editors of basal reading series have the responsibility to insure that their materials will help to eliminate ageism and will portray the elderly in proportion to their numbers and sex in this country. An accurate, fair and varied view of senior citizens lifestyles should be presented in terms of economic levels, housing, physical processes, occupations, sexual expression and spiritual, social and intellectual activities (Spencer, 1979).

Britton and Lumpkin (1977) describes anti-bias guides issued by basal reader publishers for their authors and editors to follow when working on textbooks. In studying bias in editions of textbooks printed after the guides were issued, the authors found that changes were minimal. They conclude that a problem does not disappear by acknowledging it and express a need for specific timetables and procedures to assist in the process.

The elderly have only recently become concerned with their portrayal in basal readers. Kingston and Drotter (1981) analyzed six readers in order to analyze how senior citizens are being treated in them and found their results were comparable to the findings of previous studies. The aged were not depicted realistically and were not shown as characters of consequence with fully developed personalities. In addition, there was stereotyping in both the texts and the illustrations, and there was often a variance between illustration and texts. Generally speaking, however, the elderly were viewed positively (nice, smart, involved, hard workers) although they were not described as well dressed, glamorous or beautiful.

Children's realistic fiction was examined by Blue (1978), with each book having at least one elderly person as a character. All 125 books studies were published between 1945 and 1975. Although most of the aged who were portrayed were grandparents, with few minority and low socioeconomic seniors depicted, the proportion of male to female characters was

found to be statistically correct.

Robin (1977) found that the seniors in the two samples of basal readers she studied were portrayed as being supportive, but most were white and few of the elderly had major roles. Her sample basal readers were published between 1953 and 1977.

In order to determine how our society portrays senior citizens, Ansello (1977) surveyed children's literature. He confined his sample to books for children from age three to age nine, and he watched specifically for the portrayal of physical and personality characteristics, as well as job and behavior descriptions. Although 16.46% of the 656 books studied contained elderly characters, only 3.96% had leading roles. Despite the fact that there are more female than male aged in our population, more than half of the elderly characters in the book were male, with few minority aged represented at all. Finally, Ansello found that almost all books that had seniors as characters had been published between 1966-1977.

A catalog is described in Today's Education (1980) that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has compiled entitled, Fair Textbooks: A Resource Guide. Its purpose is to promote, ". . . equality based on sex, race, ethnicity, and, in general, greater social fairness for all." The guide was designed to help those involved in curriculum planning to use, most effectively, the enormous amount of materials available in this area. Committees of educators choosing

basal readers must try to ascertain whether the basal will prejudice children about various groups of people, including the aged.

One of the ways in which we communicate the values of our society is through the printed page. It becomes important, therefore, to find out, through children's reading material, what values are being exhibited. Aaron and Anderson (1981) compared values presented in children's magazines and basal readers and found that the values being communicated in recent children's reading materials are much the same as those presented years ago. In the 36 periodical stories that were analyzed, 48 females were associated with values, but no grandmothers were included, and 46 males were associated with values, and one grandfather was included in the total. In the 63 basal stories that were analyzed, 108 females were associated with values, and eight grandmothers were included, and 140 males were associated with values, and seven grandfathers were included in the total.

Schools are increasingly involved in exposing children to useful and varied career opportunities, and basal readers and other materials that portray aging positively and as a growing force may foster an interest in gerentology as a career. Since chronology is no measure of one's ability to enjoy life or contribute to it, there are numerous and varied careers in this area.

Because the elderly are the fastest growing segment of our society, traditional careers in aging will have to expand and new ones will appear. Johnson (1982) predicts that there will soon be a shortage of geriatric specialists. Particularly hard hit will be the field of health specialists, and medical schools are beginning to set up departments of geriatrics. In addition, architects, recreation experts, journalists, artists, educators, historians and advertising and personnel specialists will be needed to work with senior citizens. There will be jobs available in geriatrics for the high school graduate as well as the PH.D.

The media in the United States, particularly TV, plays a vital role in shaping the attitudes of our citizens. Particularly vulnerable are our children. In view of the research in the field of the aged and the media, it is not surprising that children and adults, and even many of the elderly themselves, do not view older people in a positive light.

Bragger (1976) claims that the media have portrayed older people so negatively that all age groups are afraid of growing old. The Gray Panther Media Watch National Committee prepared guidelines for monitoring the media, and they watch for stereotypes, distortions and omissions in the portrayal of the elderly. Committee members view TV programs, and their reports are discussed and acted upon at regular meetings. In our mobile and fragmented society, many children only have

contact with the aged through the media which, unfortunately, portray seniors either negatively, comically or idiotically. Children's TV programs are now being monitored as well because of numerous complaints about them.

Few programs, claims Bragger, deal with the meaningful contributions the elderly make to their communities and country, and the aged are also not presented in proportion to their numbers. While all the networks are guilty of ageism to some degree, only a few have made an attempt to portray more realistic images of senior citizens.

Commercials with older people in them make one think of illness for obvious reasons; the seniors are portrayed as experts on dentures, constipation and pain. On the positive side, Bragger tells us that the National Association of Broadcasters Code Board voted to add "age" (which joins sex, color, and race) to their sensitivity guidelines.

Harris and Feinberg (1977) found that while seniors are well represented on TV, the quality of their portrayal is the problem that needs to be addressed. In commercials, where youthfulness is prevalent, the aged are depicted as boring, sickly and plain. Even in the programs, the elderly were shown to be one-dimensional with a narrow range of emotions. TV deals particularly harshly with the elderly woman -- as age increased, esteem decreased.

School children read newspapers, and an investigation by Buchholz and Bynum (1982) suggests that two newspapers they researched received mixed marks in their coverage of senior citizens. They suggest that this was only one more indication of a failure by the media throughout the country to portray an accurate, realistic and balanced picture of the elderly and other groups as well.

Many stories for children that include the elderly as characters contain familiar stereotypes, according to Cohen (1980). Death is a major theme, sometimes infrequent and frightening and sometimes remote with normalcy returning quickly. Often there is poor regard for old people until some dramatic event demonstrates that respect and love are due. A good number of these stories take place in small towns although statistics show that most seniors live in cities. Cohen recommends books that avoid ageist stereotypes and portray an understanding of the aging process we are all undergoing.

When Twentieth Century adolescent literature was analyzed by Peterson and Karnes (1976), it was found that senior citizens were portrayed similarly in books published most recently and in books published at the beginning of the century. The authors were concerned with the importance of the elderly, the extent of their portrayal and the types of aged represented. Although the older characters were not fully developed and were not involved in the important areas, they

were, however, well represented.

According to Suhngren and Smith (1978), negative stereotyping of seniors seems to extend into the area of poetry as well. One hundred twenty-seven poems were examined, all taken from the "old age" category of Granger's Index of Poetry. The text analysis revealed attitudes that were very negative concerning losses in the social, emotional and physical realms.

Older people, claims Smith (1979) are not often found in humorous cartoons, especially those magazines that sell mostly to women. When 2,217 cartoons, taken from a variety of magazines, were studied it was found that they tended to view the aged in a negative fashion. Two of three negative themes that occurred often were ultra-conservatism and sexual dysfunction. The few positive themes dealt mainly with the elderly portrayed in roles not ordinarily associated with them.

Demos and Jache (1981) reported on an analysis of age related humorous birthday card messages. Coders worked with 195 cards in all, and they indicated that senior citizens were more often than not depicted in a negative fashion. Further study indicated that the themes dealt with were mostly about mental and physical attributes and areas concerned with the aging process.

Tibbetts (1979) tells us that negative attitudes about the elderly became more pronounced in the United States when we changed from a rural, frontier economy to an urban, industrial economy. But he feels that the negative stereotypes are lessening and are being replaced by an appreciation for older adults in terms of the quality of their lives and their contributions both to their communities and society as a whole. The factors contributing to this change of attitude include different aspects of the life style of senior citizens -- including their work role, their volunteer role, their family role, their learner role and their citizenship and advocacy role.

Most young people are apparently unaware that middle and old age have their own rewards and satisfactions. Five hundred thirty-two subjects from six years to 65+ were asked to rate, at eight different age intervals, both an "average person's life" and their own. Borges and Dutton (1976) reported that most senior citizens said that their lives were more rewarding than the younger people predicted their own would be when they became older Americans.

Sullivan (1982) has found that the special status the aged have in some mountain villages in Russia contribute to their unusual longevity. These villages have five times the number of centenarians that exist in the United States. Their society is described as a "gerontocratic" one -- governed by the aged. There is little shock of retirement because the

seniors participate in a council of elders, they perform a prestigious hospitality role in the community and the young consult with them often for advice. Their extended life span is, in essence, a result of psychological well-being through the power they still yield and through good conditions in their homes.

The related research in the field of aging, aging education and ageism demonstrates the need for an updated look at basal readers for the sake of the young student, for the sake of the senior citizen and for the sake of American society. Our young people need to have a realistic awareness and understanding of the aging process through their basal readers, and other educational materials, so that age need not become a barrier to a happy and creative existence in this country.

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